



# Myanmar – EU Trade Helpdesk



## EU Export Market Scan: Sesame Seeds

### Myanmar Sesame Seeds

Sesame seeds are seeds of the sesame plant (*Sesamum indicum*), which grows in pods or "buns" in tropical regions around the world. They are used as a cooking ingredient or for the production of sesame oil. In the European Union (EU), sesame seeds are used mainly as a topping for bakery products. Crushing sesame seeds for the production of oil is very rare in the EU, as sesame oil is mainly imported as already processed.

Myanmar is one of the leading producers of sesame seeds. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) officially ranks Myanmar as the world's second largest producer of sesame seeds, but many experts estimate that Myanmar is actually number one, followed by India.

Myanmar sesame seeds



Source: Myanmar exporters

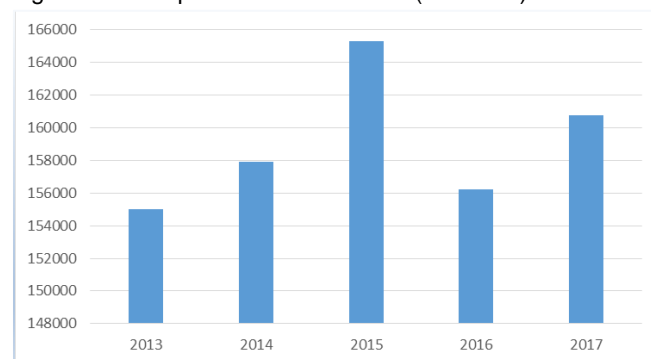
In Myanmar, sesame occupies approximately 47% of the oilseed area. Sesame seeds are produced in the central dry zone of the country – in the Magway, Mandalay, and Sagaing Regions. Myanmar exporters can offer EU buyers white and black sesame seeds in natural and hulled form.

### Sesame Seeds in the EU

EU imports of sesame seeds are increasing at an average annual rate of 1%, but decreasing in value at the average rate of -4%. This indicates a drop in import prices. EU total imports reached 160,000 tonnes and EUR 226 million in 2017. EU imports from countries outside the EU were 123,000 tonnes and EUR 160 million. In the last five years (since 2013), EU imports of sesame seeds have increased by nearly 6,000 tonnes.

EU imports of sesame seeds are expected to continue growing. Besides traditional uses in bakery and confectionary products, the increasing popularity of products like tahini and hummus drives demand and product innovation.

Figure 1: EU import of sesame seeds (in tonnes)



Source: International Trade Centre (ITC) Trade Map, 2018

Sesame seeds are not cultivated in the EU. Around 3,000 tonnes of sesame seeds are re-exported out of the EU. Therefore, estimated consumption of sesame seeds within the EU is around 160,000 tonnes.

### Potential Target Markets in the EU

The EU market for sesame seeds is quite concentrated. The main three importers – Germany, Greece, and the Netherlands – account for more than half of total EU imports.

The main target markets for Myanmar sesame seeds exporters should be Germany and Greece, which are the largest European importers of sesame seeds. In addition, the Netherlands is an interesting market, being the largest trader and re-exporter of sesame seeds.

Opportunities can also be found in France, which is the largest EU consumer of sesame seeds per capita (total estimated consumption is around 11,000 tonnes). It has a very developed bakery industry, which is the leading industrial user of sesame seeds as an ingredient.

Myanmar sesame seeds exporters can also find opportunities in other smaller but fast-growing markets.

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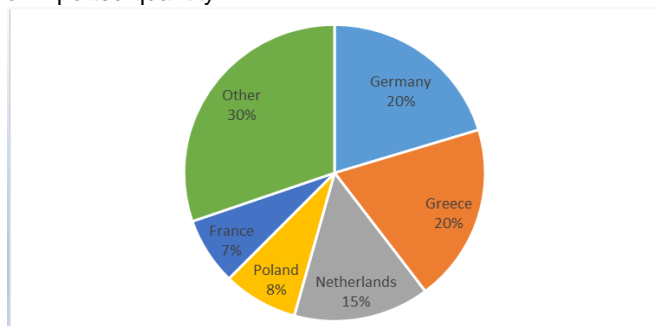


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The fastest-growing EU market for sesame seeds is Bulgaria, with an average annual import growth rate of 18% in quantity. It doubled its imports from 1,000 tonnes in 2013 to 2,000 tonnes in 2017. Romania has also shown high growth rates.

Figure 2: EU sesame seeds import structure in 2017, share of imported quantity



Source: International Trade Centre (ITC) Trade Map, 2018

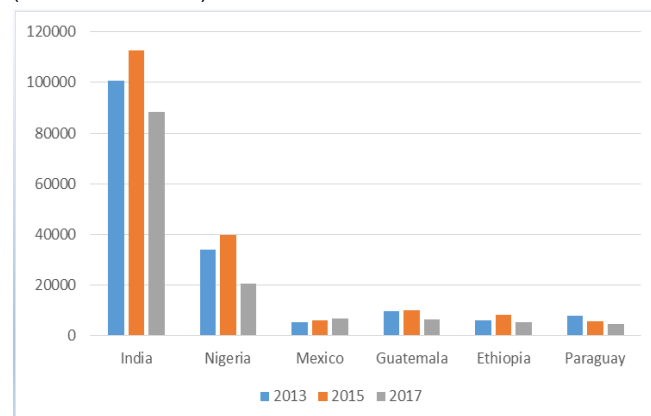
## EU Market Characteristics

On the EU market, the largest share of sesame seeds is used as a topping on bread, buns, and other pastries. Therefore, the most important trade channel for Myanmar suppliers of sesame seeds would be specialised wholesalers that supply the baking industry. Some large industry processors can be supplied directly, thus shortening the supply chain. However, such an approach is challenging, as long-lasting relationships are sought after.

Retail channels for packaged sesame seeds in the EU account for a smaller market share. They are usually not supplied directly by exporting companies, but again via specialised wholesalers or commercial brands. In the retail segment, white sesame seeds are mainly sold under retail chain brands (private labels). Commercial brands are more present in the retail segment with black or organic sesame seeds. Therefore, opportunities for Myanmar high-quality black or organic sesame seeds can be found in direct contacts with established brand suppliers of bakery ingredients, cereals, and spices.

India is by far the most important supplier of sesame seeds to the EU, accounting for more than half of total supply (around 65,000 tonnes). The country with the highest annual growth rate is Argentina, increasing its exports to the EU from only a few tonnes in 2013 to 2,000 tonnes in 2017. Myanmar is currently an insignificant supplier of sesame seeds to the EU.

Figure 3: Leading suppliers of sesame seeds to the EU (in EUR thousand)



Source: International Trade Centre (ITC) Trade Map, 2018

## EU Market Access Requirements

- Sesame seeds must be safe. The most common problem faced by suppliers is a lack of good hygiene practices, causing microbiological contamination. Due to frequent contamination with salmonella, the EU officially increased border controls (official customs laboratory testing) for 50% of all shipments of sesame seeds coming from Sudan, Uganda, and Nigeria.
- EU importers often request food safety certification. The most common certification schemes are [IFS](#), [FSSC22000](#), and [BRC](#).

## How to Find Buyers in the EU?

You can search and find potential buyers in the EU via several sources, such as:

- **Trade Fairs:** [Anuga](#) (biannual, Germany), [SIAL Paris](#) (biannual France), [Gulfood](#) (annual, Dubai)
- **Members lists of associations:** [FOSFA](#), [FEDIOL](#), [COCERAL](#)

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